

Draft Environmental Impact Statement
for a

Proposed Recreation
Area Management Plan
and Amendment
to the California Desert
Conservation Area Plan:
Imperial Sand Dunes
Recreation Area



March 2002



**United States Department of
the Interior**
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
El Centro Field Office
1661 South 4th Street
El Centro, California 92243



March 28, 2002

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review is the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for a Proposed Recreation Area Management Plan and Amendment to the California Desert Conservation Area Plan: Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area*. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the federal lead agency, has prepared the Draft EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

This Draft EIS is a comprehensive environmental analysis of alternatives (including the No Action Alternative) for the revision and updating of the *Recreation Area Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Imperial Sand Dunes* (BLM, 1987). A revised Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) would provide direction and guidance on the management of land use and resources of the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA) that would be consistent with current public needs and resources status. Implementing a revised RAMP would also constitute an amendment to the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan in accordance with BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.3-2).

The purpose of revising the 1987 *Recreation Area Management Plan* is to develop a comprehensive and detailed management plan consistent with conditions and guiding statutes as they exist at the ISDRA in the early 21st century. A revised RAMP would be designed to provide a variety of sustainable off-highway vehicle (OHV) and other recreational activities, and to maintain or improve the conditions of the special-status species and other unique natural and cultural resources, while creating an environment to promote the health and safety of visitors, employees, and nearby residents.

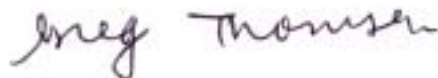
The public's involvement in the development of Draft EIS has been instrumental, and continued public participation is considered key to the success of the ISDRA management program. A 90-day public comment period has been established for the Draft EIS. It begins March 29, 2002, and ends June 28, 2002. Comments concerning this Draft EIS are welcome and will be considered in the preparation of the Final EIS. Please mail comments to the letterhead address above with attention to Jim Komatinsky.

Six public meetings will be held to obtain additional public input on the Draft EIS. All the meetings will occur from 7 PM to 10 PM. The dates and locations of these meetings are as follows:

April 9, 2002	El Centro, CA	City Council Chambers 1275 Main Street El Centro, CA
April 11, 2002	Long Beach, CA	The Grand 4101 East Willow Street Long Beach, CA 90815
April 15, 2002	Phoenix, AZ	Phoenix College 1202 West Thomas Road Phoenix, AZ
April 18, 2002	Brawley, CA	Brawley City Council 225 A Street Brawley, CA 92227
April 23, 2002	Yuma, AZ	Yuma Civic and Convention Center 1440 West Desert Hills Drive Yuma, AZ
April 25, 2002	San Diego, CA	Marriott Mission Valley 8757 Rio San Diego Drive San Diego, CA 92108

The dates, times, and locations of these meetings will also be announced in the *Federal Register* and published in local newspapers in the near future.

Sincerely,



Greg Thomsen

Field Manager, El Centro

Enclosure

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ABSTRACT

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Recreation Area Management Plan and Amendment to the California Desert Area Plan: Imperial Sand Dune Recreation Area (project). The project is a proposal by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to revise and update the *Recreation Area Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Imperial Sand Dunes*. The Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA) is located in Imperial County, in southeastern California, approximately 25 miles west of the Colorado River and immediately north of the border between the United States and Mexico.

The project would provide direction and guidance on the management of land use and resources of the ISDRA that would be consistent with current public needs and resources status. The project includes the designation of management areas, assignment of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classifications to those management areas, enhancement of efforts to encourage a safe and enjoyable recreational experience for the user, and emphasis on public education about OHV use in the context of the recreational, cultural, and biological resources of the area. Where facilities are planned, and where law enforcement is planned to be increased, these actions are proposed to enhance public safety in the context of an enjoyable recreational experience.

Implementing a revised RAMP would constitute an amendment to the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan, in accordance with BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.3-2). The BLM is the lead agency for this DEIS, and maintains primary responsibility for compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for actions on federal lands it manages. In addition, the BLM is responsible for consulting with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to ensure that the project complies with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The USFWS is a cooperating agency under NEPA.

The project incorporates measures to reduce the level and significance of impacts to the human environment. With the application of mitigation measures, the project would not result in significant adverse effects.

Project alternatives that are analyzed in this DEIS include:

- Alternative 1: No Action Alternative
- Alternative 2: Recreation and Resource Protection Alternative
- Alternative 3: Natural and Cultural Resource Alternative
- Alternative 4: Motorized Recreation Opportunities Alternative

**Federal, State,
and Local
Agency
Authorizing
Actions
Required for
Project
Implementation**

- Issuance of the Record of Decision (ROD) to allow the BLM to move forward in amending the CDCA Plan with an updated RAMP. The amendment of the CDCA Plan would then allow for implementation of the management actions described in the RAMP.
- Biological Opinion from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a result of formal consultation with the BLM in conformance with Section 7 of the federal Endangered Species Act.